

Executive Summary

Purpose. The purpose of this project was to conduct a statewide needs assessment in order to determine the counties in the State of Kentucky in which a Drug Court program is needed and feasible. The assessment was conducted in two phases. Phase I of this project focused on countywide data collection and data analysis. Phase II focused on the feasibility of implementing a Drug Court program in the counties identified as being most in need of a Drug Court program and on more in-depth community resources and county demographic, economic, and social indicators.

Phase I. Data for each of 107 counties that did not already have a Drug Court program or were not currently planning a Drug Court program was collected. Data collected for each county included: Population estimates from the 1996 census data; Number of non-drug arrests; Percent of non-drug arrests by population; Number of drug arrests; Percent of drug arrests by population; Number of DUI closings; Average time to disposition for non-drug arrests; Average time to disposition for drug arrests; Average caseload of probation officers by district; Psychological and medical services; Vocational and educational services; and Social services.

Results of Phase I. Results of Phase I indicated that Barren, Christian, Henderson, Hopkins, Livingston, Marshall, McCracken, Nelson, Perry, Rockcastle, Russell, and Simpson counties were identified as having a higher number of drug arrests and a greater number of community psychological resources than the other counties. These 12 counties made up 11% of the total number of counties included in the analysis and were the focus of Phase II of the needs assessment.

Phase II. Phase II focused on the feasibility of implementing a Drug Court program in the counties identified in Phase I. In order to effect long lasting community change, it is essential that communities develop interventions that are uniquely tailored to the specific community and that interventions are implemented with community support. Communities are very different from each other. What is successful in one community may not be successful in other communities, in part because resources, strengths, challenges, and political climates vary from community to community. The Community Readiness Model is a method for assessing the level of readiness of a community to develop and implement a program, such as a Drug Court program. The conceptualization of the Community Readiness Model was used in Phase II of this study to help interpret survey responses.

Feasibility and community readiness was assessed by collecting more in-depth information regarding the county and the specific area in which the Circuit courthouse was located. Telephone interviews (n=121) were conducted with key community representatives including Judges (n=30); Law enforcement representatives, such as jailers, police, and probation and parole officers, (n=49); Defense attorney representatives (n=25); and Prosecuting attorney representatives (n=17) across all of the counties. Overall there was a 91% response rate between attempted survey contacts and completed survey contacts.

In addition to the survey, community resource information was obtained for each community for which Judges indicated a desire to conduct the feasibility study in their community (n=10 counties). The third part of the data collection included demographic, economic, and social information as well as adult and juvenile substance use estimates and arrest data.

Results of Phase II. Overall, out of the 12 counties identified in Phase I, there were two counties in which Judges indicated no interest in pursuing Phase II of the needs assessment at this time.

Christian, McCracken, and Rockcastle County representatives were supportive of having a Drug Court program in their communities and had adequate community resources necessary to support a Drug Court program. Christian and McCracken Counties both had relatively high juvenile arrests suggesting a juvenile Drug Court program may be valuable in these counties as well. Russell County representatives were also enthusiastic about having a Drug Court program in their community. However, community resources in Russell County were more limited. It is recommended that all four communities apply for a Drug Court planning grant to move into the next stage necessary for implementing a Drug Court program.

Barren and Perry County respondents were supportive of the concept of Drug Court program in their community, but not overwhelmingly cohesive in their support and other responses regarding a Drug Court program. These two counties had excellent community resources available that a Drug Court program could utilize. Livingston and Marshall County respondents were also supportive, however, representatives were not cohesive in support for a Drug Court Program. Community resources for these two communities were limited and juvenile substance use estimates were relatively high. All four communities could utilize further information about Drug Courts and key community leader meetings in order to move these communities toward a planning grant application.

Henderson and Hopkins County respondents were somewhat supportive of a Drug Court program, however, not cohesive in that support. Both Counties had adequate community resources. Both counties had relatively higher juvenile arrests and Hopkins County had relatively higher juvenile substance use rates indicating a juvenile Drug Court program may also benefit these communities.

In summary, of 107 counties, 12 were identified for further assessment. Of the 12 identified for further assessment four communities were ready to move toward an implementation of a Drug Court program by applying for a planning grant (Christian, McCracken, Rockcastle, and Russell). Four were close to being ready to applying for a planning grant, but need further information regarding Drug Court programs (Barren, Perry, Livingston, and Marshall). Two counties could utilize extensive information about a Drug Court program but had Judges that were supportive of the idea (Henderson and Hopkins). About half of the counties in each category had adequate community resources and half had more limited resources indicating that some of the counties may

want to consider alternative treatment models. Three of the counties were very rural and had social indicators suggesting low education levels and few economic opportunities. Programs in these areas may need to be creative in meeting the needs of their clients. Several counties had indicators including higher juvenile substance use rates, higher juvenile arrests, more births to teen and very young mothers, and more adolescents in the community, which suggested a juvenile Drug Court program may benefit the community. Finally, two counties were not able to consider a Drug Court program at the time of this study (Nelson and Simpson).